

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 008358

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: AK PARTY TO FORM NEW TURKISH GOVERNMENT WITH ABDULLAH GUL AS PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. ANKARA 8310

[1](#)B. ANKARA 8165

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch; reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) Nov. 16 President Sezer gave the mandate to form the new Turkish government to AK Party number two Abdullah Gul (ref A), who announced he will submit his proposed cabinet list to Sezer Nov. 18. We expect the government to be in office a week to ten days thereafter. Gul bio in para 5.

[1](#)2. (U) To underscore to both the Turkish Establishment and voters that he remains firmly in charge of AK Party and will dominate policy-making, party chairman Erdogan held a concurrent press conference to announce AK's one-year emergency action plan. It was clear from TV coverage, which focused on Erdogan, not on Gul's visit to the presidency, that the country understands. It is the general expectation that AK will pursue amendments to the constitution and other legal remedies to allow Erdogan to become P.M. in several months (ref B).

[1](#)3. (U) The party program, which will become the new GOT's program, calls among other things for:

--intensified efforts to reach EU standards of democracy;

--continued close work with the IMF;

--rapid action to combat unemployment (the number one voter issue in Turkey), make the budget process more efficient and more comprehensive (i.e., bring all but municipal budgets under the central budget authority);

--transparency in Turkish governance (Erdogan pointedly announced that the program is downloadable from AK's web site "so that everyone in Turkey can see how well we stick to our program").

[1](#)4. (C) In the follow-on question and answer period Erdogan, who has now departed to pay a flying visit to northern Cyprus, in underscoring AK's intention to be pragmatic and open-minded on the UN plan to reach a Cyprus settlement, acknowledged the need for compromise on both sides. (Note: in a private meeting with us Nov. 15, AK Party number three and probable speaker of Parliament Bulent Arinc criticized the culture of nay-saying in the Turkish MFA with regard to Cyprus and other regional issues. End note.)

[1](#)5. (C) Gul bio:

--Abdullah Gul was born in 1950 into a poor but pious working-class family in Kayseri in the Anatolian heartland (father was a lathe operator). Graduated from Istanbul U. economics faculty. Served as an associate professor of industrial engineering at Sakarya U. Has the title of Associate Professor of Economics. In the 1980's employed as an economic expert at the Islamic Development Bank in Jiddah. Entered Parliament in 1991 with the Islamist Refah Party of Necmettin Erbakan. Served as a State Minister with foreign policy responsibilities (in effect an internal shadow FonMin given Refah's distrust of coalition partner and FonMin Tansu Ciller) in the 1996-97 Erbakan-led government. Stayed with Erbakan in Fazilet Party, which was formed after Refah was banned, but then launched a reformist movement and narrowly lost a direct challenge to Erbakan's hand-picked Fazilet leader Recai Kutan for the party chairmanship. A founder of AK Party in 2001. Speaks Arabic and fluent English. Married, three children.

--Gul is a long-time, close contact of Embassy Ankara. He has an excellent understanding of the American mind and of U.S. foreign policy priorities. For years he served as a de

facto spokesman -- judged to be reasonable and open-minded by Western and Islamist interlocutors -- for Refah and Fazilet and has been an influential and moderate voice for Islam-oriented politics in Turkey. A number of long-standing embassy contacts has told us consistently that the relationship between Gul and party chairman Erdogan is complex. He is loyal to Erdogan but has his own ambitions and occasionally in comments to us has chafed at his subordination to the more rough-edged Erdogan. Both came through the Erbakan movement ranks together with Gul representing the more technocratic stream. While Erdogan is far and away the most popular figure in AK, Gul has strong grass-roots and parliamentary support of his own and has built a formidable network of relations with politicians of all stripes, bureaucrats, academics, and journalists.

--Gul has an obliging (mulayim) and courteous character stemming from his modest and very pious upbringing. His faith in Islam is rock solid, as is his courage of convictions: Gul is no pushover. Comfortable with intellectual and political give-and-take, he nevertheless maintains his principles and is sincere in the belief that Turkey must accept women in Islamic headscarves as full participants in society. His wife passed the university entrance exam but was denied matriculation owing to her wearing of an Islamic headscarf; she currently has a case against the Turkish government on this issue before the European Court of Human Rights. He also firmly believes in the need to redress the current imbalance in civilian-military relations, privately telling us forthrightly that if pushing this kind of democratic reform would be considered "destabilizing" by the Kemalist Establishment, "then so be it." This kind of comment, combined with Gul's knowledge of the system and his smooth manner, leads some Kemalist circles to fear that he would succeed in implementing an Islamist agenda effectively. Gul has the serene but focused temperament (huzur) similar to that of late president Turgut Ozal. At the same time he is untainted by the corruption surrounding the Ozal family and government.

PEARSON